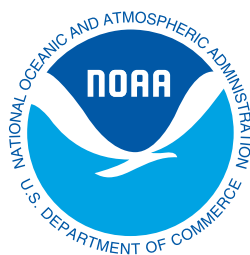


# ***NOAA EXECUTIVE DECISION PROCESS***



Office of the Deputy Under Secretary  
14th & Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230  
[www.dco.noaa.gov](http://www.dco.noaa.gov)

# ***THE EXECUTIVE DECISION PROCESS***

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# THE EXECUTIVE DECISION PROCESS

## Background:

Decisions in NOAA will be made at the lowest practical level. The process outlined below provides a framework in which issues can be resolved at the lowest possible level and, as necessary, elevated to a higher level in an orderly manner.

## Organization:

NOAA's Executive Decision Process (EDP) uses a tiered structure wherein significant NOAA issues are identified, discussed, decided or framed for decision at the next higher level. It consists of:

- A) Councils and Committees
- B) NOAA Executive Panel (NEP)
- C) NOAA Executive Council (NEC)

- A. Councils and Committees. NOAA's councils and committees are the focal point for considering NOAA-wide issues (e.g., planning, resource requirements, and policy) in various functional areas. They serve as a forum for reviewing and as appropriate deciding issues, formulating decision briefings, and condensing complex issues and programs into understandable terms and recommendations for decision before presentations to the NEC and NEP.
  - 1. The terms of reference and responsibilities of each council and committee can be found on the Decision Coordination Office (DCO) website at <http://www.dco.noaa.gov>.
  - 2. Councils and committees will convene as designated by the chairperson. Each council/committee chair will designate permanent staff to coordinate, archive and maintain records. The staff will include an executive secretariat that will draft and distribute minutes and decision memoranda. Copies of council/committee minutes and decision memoranda shall be provided to the DCO within two weeks (10 business days) after any meeting. DCO will collect and retain Council NOAA Decision Memoranda (NDMs), as appropriate.
- B. NOAA Executive Panel (NEP). The NEP provides information and advice to the Deputy Under Secretary for issues related to NOAA's day-to-day operations and management, and coordinates and oversees the planning, programming and budgeting process. The NEP serves as the final forum ensuring issues, programs and briefings are condensed into understandable terms and recommendations for decisions before presentation to the NEC.
  - 1. NEP principals include: DUS (Chair), all Deputy AA's (including PPI Deputy), Deputy Director NMAO, CIO, CFO, CAO, and Directors of WMO, PA&E, and AGO.
  - 2. NEP advisors include: Executive Director to the Deputy Under Secretary, Executive Director to the NOAA Chief of Staff, and Deputy Directors of OESD, OGC, IA, OLA, OPCIA, and Military Affairs.
  - 3. The Decision Coordination Office (DCO) will serve as Executive Secretary to the NEC and NEP.
  - 4. Depending on topic, Goal Team Leads, Council Chairs or subject matter experts may attend the applicable portion of the meeting. DCO approval is required.
  - 5. Operating procedures and a process flowchart for the NEP are included in the appendix.

C. NOAA Executive Council (NEC). The NEC provides information and advice to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (U/S) for decisions on key NOAA issues (e.g. policy, resources requirement approval, future directions) and to provide a clear and unambiguous record of U/S decisions and directions.

1. NEC principals include: U/S (Chair), Assistant Secretary, Deputy Under Secretary (DUS), Deputy Assistant Secretaries, all Assistant Administrators (AA) and Director, NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations (NMAO).
2. NEC advisors include : NOAA Chief of Staff; Director of Office of Public, Constituent, and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPCIA); Office of General Counsel (OGC); Director of Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA); Chief Information Officer (CIO); Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E); Chief Administrative Officer (CAO); Chief Financial Officer (CFO); Director of Workforce Management Office (WMO); Director of Acquisition and Grants Office (AGO); Director of Office of Education and Sustainable Development (OESD), Executive Director to the Deputy Under Secretary and Executive Director to the NOAA Chief of Staff.
3. Depending on topic, Goal Team Leads, Council Chairs or subject matter experts may attend the applicable portion of the meeting. DCO approval is required.
4. The Decision Coordination Office will serve as Executive Secretary to the NEC and NEP.
5. Operating procedures and a process flowchart for the NEC are included in the appendix.

### **Responsibilities:**

The Deputy Under Secretary is responsible for the operation and administration of the NOAA Executive Decision Process.

A. The Decision Coordination Office (DCO) will serve as Executive Secretary to the NEC and NEP. The DCO will:

- Establish meeting agendas, procedures and attendance
- Distribute schedule information; prepare, distribute and maintain NEC/NEP proceedings (minutes and NOAA Decision Memorandum)
- Maintain and archive a list of outstanding NEP/NEC actions items
- In cooperation with Executive Secretariat, track actions to ensure completion

B. Line or staff offices assigned actions in a NOAA Decision Memorandum will forward responses via the NOAA controlled correspondence system with a copy to DCO. Responses longer than a page should be forwarded under cover of a one-page summary paper. Tasked line/staff offices are responsible for incorporating NEC/NEP decisions into appropriate NOAA policy documents.

### **Attendance:**

Candid discussion and the provision of quality advice are facilitated by small meetings. Attendance will be controlled.

- A. Principals are expected to attend meetings. If unable to attend, a principal may send a senior executive (empowered to speak for the principal) to the meeting. DCO shall be notified of any substitutions.
- B. Advisors are not required to attend each NEC/NEP meeting, however, they are expected to attend sessions dealing with topics in their functional area. Advisors may not send substitutes unless lack of representation in their functional area would degrade the effectiveness of the discussion. Prior approval from DCO is required for any substitutions.
- C. Depending on the topic, Goal Team Leads, Council chairs or subject matter experts may attend the portion of the meeting related to their subject of interest. Prior approval from DCO is required.

# PROCEDURES FOR THE NEC/NEP

## Administrative:

- A. The Decision Coordination Office (DCO) will (within two business days of a meeting) prepare and distribute meeting minutes (including brief summary, decisions and action items). The minutes will be coordinated with the NOAA Chief of Staff and Executive Director to the Deputy Under Secretary. Members will have two business days for coordination.
- B. A NOAA Decision Memorandum (NDM) will serve to document and provide a clear record of decisions and direction. Within eight business days of a NEC/NEP meeting, the DCO will prepare and forward an NDM for signature to the Under Secretary (U/S) or Deputy Under Secretary (DUS), as appropriate. Copies will be provided to NEC/NEP members and archived by the DCO.

## Procedures:

- A. Principals and advisors are expected to come to meetings with a grasp of the issues and be prepared to discuss alternatives, implications of proposed actions and what is best for NOAA. Principals and advisors are not required to personally present NEC/NEP briefings. They may select a subject matter or functional expert to give the presentation.
- B. All presentations (except informational presentations) to the NEC must be reviewed by the NEP. If the NEP believes the presentation provides insufficient factual information, requires clearer focus or fails to adequately identify alternatives, or lacks clear identification of the problem, guidance will be provided for necessary improvement before the presentation is approved to proceed to the NEC.
- C. Decision briefings impacting financial resources (budget year or out year) must be reviewed by the CFO Council before presentation to the NEC/NEP.
- D. Presenters will provide “read ahead” materials (which include presentations, issue assessments, and any related materials) electronically to DCO no later than 5 business days prior to their scheduled presentation. Prior to submission, all presentations should be cleared by the appropriate AA or DAA, as well as all relevant Councils. Changes to presentation materials (after submission) are not permitted without the approval of the NEC/NEP Chair.
- E. Topics pertaining to multiple line or staff offices must be fully coordinated prior to submission.
- F. In most cases, one hour will be allocated on the NEC/NEP agenda for each presentation. To allow adequate time for discussion, briefings should not exceed 30 minutes.

## G. Presentation Requirements

1. Presenters must stay within their allotted briefing time according to the NEC/NEP agenda.
2. Presenters are responsible for “slide forwarding” or equipment operation (DCO will handle all equipment set-up issues).
3. Accurate and traceable cost, schedule and performance information should be included in the briefing.
4. Presentations should provide a solid basis for decisions by including reasonable and viable options and accurate and verifiable information. Presentations must strike a balance between brevity and completeness. Briefing tips are available on the DCO website.
5. Presentations should be prepared as follows:
  - (a) In the standard NOAA briefing format. Tailor material to briefing purpose (i.e., decision or information).
  - (b) Pages oriented length-wise (landscape orientation).
  - (c) Each page numbered consecutively.
6. If revisions are required (as approved by the NEC/NEP Chair) to any “read ahead” packages, hard copies must be provided at the meeting with any changes indicated by highlight, or by margin notation or other clearly identified methods.
7. Identify any Five Year Plan (FYP) funding impacts, by fiscal year, noting whether funding is shown in constant or “then year” dollars. Be consistent throughout the briefing.

H. When time is critical for a decision and a NEC or NEP meeting is not possible, a Virtual NEC/NEP Decision may be used. Procedures for a Virtual NEC/NEP Decision can be found on the DCO website at <http://www.dco.noaa.gov>.

## **Scheduling:**

The DCO will be responsible for scheduling meetings. Both the NEC and NEP will meet bi-weekly (on off weeks) or at the call of the Chair. NEC/NEP principals, advisors and council chairs may suggest issues for NEC/NEP deliberation by sending the DCO a memorandum stating:

- A. Proposed topic
- B. Rationale for presentation
- C. Expected issues
- D. Desired presentation date

The request should be submitted to DCO staff, well in advance of the desired presentation date.

## ***NEC/NEP Process Timeline***

### **Business Days Before**

NEC/NEP presentations & read-aheads due to DCO for DUS briefing

### **3 Business Days Before**

NEC/NEP, DCO sends agenda and presentation materials to NEC/NEP group

### **1 Business Day Before**

NEC/NEP, DCO sets up meeting room

### **NEC/NEP MEETING**

DCO takes notes for minutes and develops action items

### **2 Business Days After**

NEC/NEP, DCO sends minutes, decisions, and actions to NEC/NEP group and presenters

### **4 Business Days After**

NEC/NEP group reviews and comments to DCO within 2 days

### **6 Business Days After**

Within 2 days after NEC/NEP group review,  
DCO updates and sends minutes/ NDMs to NEC/NEP group & ExecSec

### **8 Business Days After**

Within 2 days ExecSec formats for UNSEC/DUS signature,  
DCO reviews, ExecSec sends to UNSEC/DUS and DCO enters actions

### **9 Business Days After**

Within 1 day UNSEC/DUS signs NDM which is then  
sent to ExecSec for distribution to DCO and to the NEC/NEP group